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see no good generic character by which it can be separated. A description and figure of this new *Passerculus*, will be found in the "Naturalists' Guide" (page 112) under the name of *Centronyx Bairdii*, with a history of the capture of the first specimen and also an account of how this name came to be applied to it. It will likewise be understood that the name of *Centronyx Bairdii*, given in a notice in the May number of the NATURALIST (page 307) by Mr. Brewster, should read *Passerculus princeps*.

The *Thalasseus Havelii*, mentioned by Mr. Brewster in the same article, should also read *Sterna Forsterii*, for I have become convinced by carefully studying a large number of specimens that the *Thalasseus Havelii* = *Sterna Havelii* of authors, is the young of *Sterna Forsterii*. — C. J. MAYNARD.

GEOLOGY.

OIL CREEK PETROLEUM KNOWN IN THE LAST CENTURY.—At a meeting of the California Academy of Sciences, July 15th, Mr. R. E. C. Stearns presented a communication, embodying the following extract from the Massachusetts Magazine published in the year 1789, Vol. i, p. 416, showing that the existence of petroleum in Pennsylvania was known at that period :

"In the northern part of Pennsylvania, there is a creek called Oil Creek, which empties into the Alleghany river, It issues from a spring, on the top of which floats an oil similar to that called Barbadoes tar ; and from which one man may gather several gallons in a day. The troops sent to guard the western posts, halted at this spring, collected some of the oil and bathed their joints with it. This gave them great relief for the rheumatism with which they were afflicted. The water of which the troops drank freely operated as a gentle purge."

MICROSCOPY.

SUCCESSIVE POLARIZATION OF LIGHT.—This curious scientific procedure has been accomplished in connection with the ordinary polarizing microscope, by Mr. J. W. Stephenson. In the selenite fitting of the polarizer, between the polarizing prism and the stage, he places, mounted so as to have a rotating movement of its own, a truncated glass prism having its broadest face silvered by the sugar of milk process, and its other faces so situated that light, polarized by passing through the Nicol's prism in a direction